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Senate Unanimously Passes Matsui Bill to Extend Critical Consumer and Safety Protections to the Traveling Public

H.R. 3360 Will Increase Safety for Cruise Ship Passengers

WASHINGTON, DC— Today, the U.S. Senate unanimously passed legislation authored by Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA) in the House of Representatives and championed by Senator John F. Kerry in the Senate. H.R. 3360, the Cruise Vessel Security and Safety Act, which was passed with bipartisan support in the House last November, is a critical and common-sense fix which will provide safety and security to Americans who go on cruise vacations without realizing they are not protected under U.S. laws when they leave its territorial waters.

“H.R. 3360 will improve the safety and security of all cruise ship passengers traveling in and out U.S. waters,” said Rep. Matsui. “Current law doesn’t pass the test of providing common-sense security measures to the travelling public to help protect them from crimes committed aboard ships or to adequately prevent individuals from going overboard. Moreover, current law does not provide the support victims and their families need in the event of a disaster. This legislation is critical to providing the security and safety measures that all Americans need and deserve, no matter if they are on land or at sea.”

“The term ‘duty free’ does not apply to the safety of passengers,” said Senator Kerry. “Murky lines of jurisdiction are no longer an excuse for risking the safety of millions of Americans who will board cruise ships this year. I applaud my colleagues for helping to ensure that security, safety, and accountability be strengthened to hold criminals accountable and end the cycle of serious crimes on these vessels.”

Matsui’s legislation would require the cruise industry to comply with a number of security provisions including specific rail heights, peep holes, warning devices, and cabin security measures. Additionally, the bill necessitates that vessels are equipped with a video surveillance system to assist in documenting and prosecuting crimes, and requires vessels to maintain a log book to record reports on specified complaints. Finally, the law will mandate cruise vessel personnel to contact both the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the United States Coast Guard as soon as a crime involving homicide, suspicious deaths, missing U.S. nationals, kidnapping, assault, and other serious occurrences are reported.

“When the cruise safety legislation is signed into law, it will serve to protect Americans across the nation during what ought to be relaxing vacations,” said International Cruise Victims Association Chairman, Kendall Carver. “Without Congresswoman Matsui’s efforts in the House and Senator Kerry’s efforts in the U.S. Senate, this legislation would not have moved forward.”

Rep. Matsui started advocating for the modernization of existing legislation in 2006 after a constituent from her hometown of Sacramento came to her after being raped on a cruise ship. From that first letter, Rep. Matsui has since worked with advocates and victims’ rights organizations from all across the country to help bring this legislation to a reality.

Following today’s historic action by the Senate, Rep. Matsui will again work with her colleagues in the House to ensure final passage of this bill. Due to minor legislative changes included by the Senate, the House must pass said changes before the bill will go to the President for signature. Rep. Matsui is hopeful that can happen by the July 4th District Work Period.

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